

# Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

## "From Sunrise to Sunset" *The United States and Manifest Destiny*

[America is bounded on the] East by sunrise, West by sunset,  
North by the Arctic Expedition, and  
South as far as we darn please."

*Philadelphia Public Ledger*, July 8, 1853

Standard: I. Culture  
II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
III. People, Places, and Environments  
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Analyze the concept of Manifest Destiny
- Interpret works of art applicable to expansionism
- Explore the positive and negative connotations of Manifest Destiny

Time: 1 class period

Materials: Documents: **1839** John L. O'Sullivan on Manifest Destiny  
Resources: *Images of Expansionism*, including:  
*Emigrants Crossing the Plains* (1867) by Albert Bierstadt  
*Buffalo Hunt, Chase* (1844) by George Catlin  
*Home in the Woods* (1847) by Thomas Cole  
*Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers through the Cumberland Gap*  
(1851) by George Caleb Bingham  
*Map of Western Expansion, 1815-1845*

Procedures:

1. Divide class into groups of 4–5 students.
2. Distribute copies of the document, *John L. O'Sullivan on Manifest Destiny*. A biography of O'Sullivan is available at:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_L.\\_O'Sullivan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_L._O'Sullivan)
3. Have students do a quick reading of the document. Each group should write a definition of Manifest Destiny. Share definitions and agree on a final "class version of the term.
4. Have students reread the document and highlight or underline sentences, phrases, and terms that best illustrate the definition of Manifest Destiny.

Each group should determine which “highlighted” sections were most commonly identified. All groups should share with the class, creating a list of common “highlights” on the board.

- 5.** Distribute copies of the four paintings to each group.
  - a.** How does each painting illustrate Manifest Destiny?
  - b.** Which painting BEST illustrates Manifest Destiny? Explain selection.
  - c.** Apply the list of highlights from the O’Sullivan document to the selected BEST painting in each group. Write the most appropriate highlights on section of paper below the painting.
  - d.** Discuss the results of each group’s work.
  - e.** Did any of the groups select Catlin’s *Buffalo Chase* as illustrative of Manifest Destiny? If so, why was it chosen? If not, why was it not chosen?

If students feel no highlighted phrases are appropriate for this painting, have them create new phrases and list under the painting. Discuss the results.

- 5.** Have students examine the *Map of Western Expansion*. Each group should write a definition of Manifest Destiny solely based on the evidence from the map. Share definitions. Do these definitions differ from ones written earlier in the lesson? Is there compatibility with phrases written on the Catlin painting? Discuss the pros and cons of Manifest Destiny.

#### Extension Activities:

Read to students this question from John L. O’Sullivan’s article:

*“Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be the great nation of futurity?”*

Suppose that O’Sullivan ask this question today rather than in 1839. Does it apply? Discuss students’ reactions. Would anyone rewrite the question? What would it be? ■